

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 20, 2004

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

As you may know, the bipartisan Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues held a hearing on sexual assault of women in the military on March 31, 2004. At this hearing, the Women's Caucus received testimony from Anita K. Blair, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Personnel Programs, U.S. Department of Defense (DoD); Jennifer Machmer, a U.S. Army Captain who was sexually assaulted; Scott Berkowitz, President and Founder of the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN); and Christine Hansen, Executive Director of The Miles Foundation.

As part of the ongoing efforts by the Women's Caucus to monitor and address the problem of sexual assault in the military, this hearing explored a variety of issues, including the need to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of victims; to provide access to appropriate medical treatment, counseling and other services for victims; and to take the necessary measures to eliminate the root causes that have continued to allow assaults to occur within the armed forces. We urge the Department of Defense to implement a policy of zero tolerance of sexual assault.

Enclosed, please find a report of the proceedings of the Women's Caucus hearing, which we trust that you and your staff will find useful in your efforts to address this problem. We appreciate the steps that you and your Department have taken thus far to address sexual assault in the military, including the Task Force on Care for Victims of Sexual Assaults, led by Ellen Embrey, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Protection and Readiness. The Task Force's investigation of the treatment of victims of sexual assault and its review of DOD policies pertaining to sexual assault and victim treatment will hopefully prove to be a useful measure in remediating this serious issue.

We look forward to the release of the Task Force's report on April 30 and to working with you and your colleagues to find permanent solutions to the problem of sexual assault in the military.

Sincerely,

/s
Louise M. Slaughter
Co-Chair, Congressional Caucus
for Women's Issues

/s
Shelley Moore Capito
Co-Chair, Congressional Caucus
for Women's Issues

/s
Hilda L. Solis
Vice-Chair, Congressional Caucus
for Women's Issues

/s
Ginny Brown-Waite
Vice-Chair, Congressional Caucus
for Women's Issues

cc: David Chu, Under Secretary, Personnel and Readiness, U.S. Department of Defense
Ellen Embrey, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Health Protection and Readiness, U.S. Department of Defense
Anita K. Blair, Deputy Assistant Secretary